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Senator Russell's Mistake

The decision of Sen. Richard Russell, Democrat of Georgia, in permitting members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to participate in overseeing Central Intelligence Agency operations is a dangerous gamble.

Last summer Sen. Russell properly fought off an attempt by Sen. J. William Fulbright, Democrat of Arkansas, to seat Foreign Relations Committee members on a CIA watchdog committee.

This week, in an abrupt change of attitude, Sen. Russell invited Sen. Fulbright, Sen. Mike Mansfield, Democrat of Montana, and Sen. Bourke B. Hickenlooper, Republican of Iowa, to participate in his group. All are members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

The reasoning of Sen. Russell is not hard to fathom. He undoubtedly does not relish another bitter, divisive Senate fight on the subject.

He probably also hopes to silence one of the CIA's most bitter critics — Sen. Fulbright.

The dangers in his action, however, are great and should be considered more important than political or personal vendettas of the Senate.

Giving the Senate Foreign Relations Committee representation on the Intelligence Agency Oversight Committee will create an impression the CIA is engaged in foreign policy — which it is not. Communists particularly will find propaganda fodder in the move.

Additionally, there is no assurance that the CIA critics will be silenced by the large concession. If they are not, there is always the danger the criticism of the CIA will reveal some matters better left unsaid from the standpoint of national interests.

We hope Sen. Russell will reconsider his decision.

Long Inquiry
Pers. Russell, Richard B.
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